Verses of Idle Hours

G. Chester Brodhay

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By

O. CHESTER BRODHAY

CHICAGO
FREDERICK C. BROWNE
1917

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To my Mother
these verses are lovingly dedicated

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Verses of Idle Hours

MOORE'S LANE

'Tis many years since here I stood
Upon this once belovèd place.
Oh, what happiness if I could
But find just one familiar trace
To tell me 'tis the selfsame place
Where years ago beneath that tree
(Which now in fancy I can see)
A little stream pursued its course
So peacefully; while straight across
There, sloping just a trifle up,
A meadow full of buttercups,
Upon whose banks of richest gold
I would to heav'n my dreams unfold,
Bask lazily in warm sunshine
Happy as though the world were mine,
With not a cloud to mar my dream
Nor to obscure the perfect scene;
Picturing all with keenest joy
With the innocence of a boy;
Painting life with the brush of youth—

Wonderful pictures of untruth,
Which often mock and cheer when men—
These were pictures I painted then.

Many a castle, wondrous fair,
Have I built and lived in there;
Great battles fought (I always won),
Grand races planned (though never run),
Fond hopes cherished and new ones born,
And stately ships that braved the storm
Were anchored there at dusk and dawn.

Here, where the sweet rosebush grew wild
And many dainty flowers smiled;
Where love lay smiling at my feet,
Yet where ne'er blush for blush need meet;
Bewitching nature's face did charm,
Bidding me rest and fear no harm.
Birds in the meadow carolled long,
Each sang to me its sweetest song;
While music from some distant bell
With languid rhythm rose and fell,
Breathing peace and yet such longing,
Rest at eve, fond hopes at morning.

And there beside that selfsame brook
I've stood for hours with rod and hook,

Watching the minnow and the roach
That shyly would my bait approach;
Scarcely daring to make a sound,
Yet now and then I'd look around
And gloat o'er those my can did hold
More than a miser o'er his gold.

Rich was I with little or naught,
Happy because content in thought;
Minutes were hours and hours seemed days,
To cheer me in a thousand ways—
The laughing brook that danced along,
Welcoming me each night and morn;
The hidden prizes in the stream;
The shining pebbles' golden gleam;
The sands I sifted 'tween my toes;
The floating bark that made canoes—
All seemed like jewels rare, yet free,
Bright gifts that nature gave to me.

Again I feel a boy's delight;
The forbidd'n orchard seems in sight;
I see the cherry trees that spread
Low to the ground their limbs of red,
The blushing fruit that weighs them down
Within fair reach of yonder ground;
And apples, though half ripe they be,

With glowing cheeks are tempting me.
My heart throbs, and I look around
To see if I can spy the hound,
Th' one that gave me many a chase,
Proclaimed me thief o'er all the place.
I think of all those summers past,
The while my breath comes thick and fast.
Halcyon days, that every boy
Looks forward to with honest joy:
Vacation days, with naught to do
But mischief seek—and mischief rue.
Ah, playgrounds of my early youth,
Art disappeared in very truth!
But memory doth still o'erspread
Time's ravages and all that's fled.

Look yonder at the farther end
Where the road makes a sweeping bend:
Many, many's the time I've stood
Within the shade of that old wood;
Where hardy oaks with leafy spray
And giant elms with limbs of gray
Colossal arms uplifted high
As if to reach unto the sky;
Where not a sound would break the peace
Nor mar the thought of perfect ease,
Except it be a bird's sweet song

Which echoed now and then so long,
Or the soft rustling of the leaves
That shed the light like sand through sieves.

'Twas here upon that well-known rock
(Mem'ry recalls a moss-grown block),
Where the glare of hot summer noon
Was mellowed as by light of moon,
That oft I sat and watched the stream,
Amid the yellow and the green,
Pursue throughout the quiet day
Peacefully its sinuous way,
With naught to interrupt its course
Except the cows that splashed across,
In eagerness to seek the shade
Which yonder lonely maple made.

Westward where the evening sun
Oft lingers on its journey done,
Gray tombstones rise, like spectres tall,
Behind a fast decaying wall;
And oaks, with limbs that tower high,
O'ertop them, dark against the sky.
Below, upon the ground, great roots
Form benches in the shady nooks,
And grasses which the walks o'errun
Hide the grave of many a one;

Thick tangled ivy o'er the wall
Climbs recklessly, defying all.
Ants dig their houses here, and play
Hide and seek through the livelong day,
Undisturbed by the visitor
Who once did trample down their door.
Here mosses thick within the shade
Hundreds of velvet beds have made;
And acorns which the rains have sown
To clumps of young oak trees have grown.
Unruly nature in full sway
Exhibits here her wild array;
Revealing unto wayward man
The workings of her mighty hand.

But now, sweet dream, thou passeth by,
And in thy place I but behold
Above, a blue expanse of sky,
Below, a scene that's drear and cold—
Oh, for those happy days of old!

MY IDEAL FACE

Some like faces sweet and fair,
Some with dark or golden hair,
Some with eyes that sparkle bright
With a joy that throws a light
Upon features that delight.

Some like faces with repose,
Some a straight and clear-cut nose,
With a mouth where firmness sits,
Or, upon whose tempting lips
Dainty sprightly Cupid flits.

And so there are many more
Which to name would only bore;
But there's one to me so dear
Whose name alone brings a tear
Of fondest joy—my mother dear.

REJOICE

In the morn of life, when heaven and earth
are one,
When fresh with fragrance are the woods and
fields,
When, dimpled with the smile of laughter,
Every earthly living thing proclaims its joy;
When gushing are the streams with merriment,
And nature all around lies at thy feet,
Jubilant with love,
Then let thy pulses thrill
With maddening delight; let loose thy soul,
To wander at its will; chase its phantoms
In the air with flighty wings—and dream,
unmindful
Of the clamor and the noise the outer world
May make. Youth's melodies soon will fade,
and then
Will come no more this God-sent dream of bliss.

Therefore today,
Ere the hours slip from thee away upon the
unseen hand of time,

Dip deep thy cup into the bubbling spring;
Draw forth its cooling waters full to the very
brim,
And drink to what sweet memory may bring.

INSPIRATION

O Soul, so splendid in thy sense of life,
Thy gift so grand, so wonderful, so true —
Ennobled am I by my sense of Thee.
Thou art the One, the only Life Divine.
Within thy secret place most high to dwell,
To soar to heights where mortal sense is still,
Where gratitude the aching voids fulfill,
And all that once seemed good revives again.

THE EVENING HOUR

THE day is done, and o'er the crimson west
A purple veil is descending;
The silhouetted sky recedes from view,
The swallow's shrill cry is ending.

Hushed is the noise and turmoil that for hours
Sped madly on — a brief respite,
Like unto that which ofttimes precedes death,
This interval 'twixt day and night.

Blacker and blacker the shadows gather,
Night hungers to o'erpower the day;
Pale lights in the great firmament shimmer,
Grow brighter, and then night holds sway.

The stars, a vast innumerable host,
Are blinking at the risen moon,
And over all the shadowed earth below
Gather wood-sprites with harps a-tune.

CHILDREN OF NO-LAND

THE knell of the day was sounded, as the red
died in the west.
The purple veil which dropped like a cloud
levelled the mountain's crest;
The foliage green in the sunlight a blackened
mass became—
Out of the deepening shadows the gypsy
caravan came.

Like wanderers from a desert seeking some
promised land,
Their wagons came lumbering onward, halted
on the upland;
Here in the cool of the evening, back from
the dusty road,
These wayfaring children of No-Land chose
their summer abode.

Horses were loosed from their breechings and
led to a near-by spring;
Axes, tents, and utensils were dragged from
their covering;

They worked with clocklike precision, each
knew what he had to do,
Out of the weird chaotic mass system and
order grew.

A wood fire crackling with fury beat the family
kettle black.
Near by a woman, still youthful, scooped meal
from a gunny-sack;
An infant, seen at a distance, caressed a re-
clining hound,
The horses back from their watering stood
stapled to the ground.

And with the passing of meal-time there fol-
lowed a brief respite;
Young and old gathered together formed a
family unit.
Men sprawled out in careless freedom, a
mother with child at breast,
Her face aglow with happiness, as unmindful
as the rest.

Lights sputtered and flashed from lanterns,
moonbeams filtered through the trees,
A south wind rustled the foliage and sifted
through the leaves;

A hoot-owl cried from the timber, its faint
sigh died o'er the hill;
The spirit of sleep shrouded the camp — all
was peaceful and still.

. . . . . .

Oft in the long days of summer, when the turf
is crisp and dry,
When the hot blasts from the pavements
reflect the heat from the sky,
In the vast shade of that woodland, amid the
cool verdure green,
I picture again that gypsy band as in that
twilight seen.

Their long gray covered wagons, the horses
unharnessed, near by,
The tents dim in the moonlight, pointing
arrowlike to the sky;
The flickering stars in the heavens as they
brighten one by one,
The light of the camp-fire ashen, proclaiming
the day is done.

JUNE–TIME

THERE'S a flutter in the treetops, as the wind
steals through the leaves;
I can see the branches swaying, nodding thanks
to fragrant breeze.
There's a glowing warmth of sunshine playing
wistfully on the green,
Dancing now amid the shadows, stealing now
away unseen.

There's a lark's song in the meadow that
ripples many a rod,
I can hear its golden music floating out and
up to God.
There's a rustle in the bushes, just a flash,
and it is gone —
A denizen of the treetops flying swiftly to its
home.

There's a perfume from the grasses and a
freshness from the leaves
That stimulates with gladness and bears a
breath of ease;

There's a quiet sense of purpose in the brook
that wends its way
Through the woodland, over country, to the
river far away.

There's a something in the heavens that
enchants the fields and hills,
That breathes the quiet of freedom and a new-
born hope instills.
There's a something—and I wonder, can it
be a violin?—
'Tis but Mother Nature blending all earth's
sounds in one glad hymn.

JUST AS OF OLD

When, in the stillness of calm, approaching night,
Reposeful lies the brook, all day sparkling bright;
When, sunk to rest in the hesperian sky,
The sun is hidden, while yet the crimson dye
Reflected from its cheek paints the clouds on high;

When each little bird, its pleasant duty done,
Has sought the quiet nook it fled from that morn;
In the hush of evening I hear far away,
'Mid the deep'ning shadows on the broad highway,
Dear Mary's voice singing a sweet roundelay;

Just as I used to hear in days long ago,
When in the dewy eve homeward she would go
With her cows from pasture, joyously along,
Always, always singing through some old love song,
Or some quaint, queer ditty, wholesome as the morn.

Pure, and as rich in tone, as some robin's note
Came the sweet melodies from her birdlike throat;
And the bright roguish face, full of childish glee,
Beaming like the sun in June, cast over me
A spell I could not resist — love's sweet witchery.

What happy, happy days, gentle Mary dear!
Memory has not failed me through many a year;
Though you be no more my love, and I far away,
I can live them o'er again just the same today,
And hear your voice singing on the broad highway;

Just as I used to hear, in days long ago,
When in the dewy eve homeward you would go
With your cows from pasture, joyously along,
Always, always singing the same old love song,
Or some quaint, queer ditty, wholesome as the morn.

A MORNING AT THE FARM

The dew lay wet upon the green
And sparkled in the morning sun,
And all the earth in song rejoiced
With gladness for the day begun.

The cattle in the fields, refreshed,
Gave bold expression to mute sense;
The living instinct in the air
Made merry with life's reverence.

The birds that chirped beneath the trees
Were calling to their mates to come,
And every creature on the ground
Seemed planning for a future home.

The cock that claimed the barnyard fence
From lofty throne his brood surveyed;
From deep recesses of the barn
The restless stabled horses neighed.

The maid that bore the milk-pail home,
With youthful glow and vigor came;

Her sparkling eyes and pink flushed face
Upon some canvas would bring fame.

When swift upon enraptured thought,
That pictured this fair morn sublime,
I felt the inconsistencies
That crowd this mortal sense of mine.

INCONSISTENCY

How strange in life that those we dearest love
Ofttimes we make the utmost strangers of.
Ah, sad indeed, the greatest thoughts we think
Are likewise thrown into the ocean depths.
Perhaps some day, when mortal eyes see clear,
Their beauty will be found to bless again.

THE SISTERS

Oh, wipe away thy tears my child, and let me
comfort you,
For death and sunshine blend not well — I'll
draw the curtains to;
Come sit thee here and cry no more, her soul
sees life anew,
She needs no tears — why, sister dear, she's
happier than you.

The smile is still upon her face, she wonders
why we cry,
And if those lips could tell us now, she'd say
'tis sweet to die;
She'd mock us with her merry laugh, and show
her dimpled cheek,
And tease us in her girlish way — if she could
only speak.

Those roguish curls that still insist on falling
o'er her brow,
Ah, how they used to worry her — they don't
annoy her now;

She heeds them not, and there they lie, unmoved e'en by a breath;
What peace, what happiness, my child is this that man calls death.

Within her snow-white hand I'll place this bud of early June,
And you may take just one last kiss, before we leave the room.
Now come, my child, come down the stairs and see the radiant sun,
That smiles for you and me, my dear, until life's day is done.

TO HEALTH

How bright thy smile, O joyful Life, when
Health flows in one's veins,
Thy vital spirit warms the earth and tempers
e'en the rains;
The deep blue of the heavens, that distantly
sweep above,
Glow with celestial visions and smile with eyes
of love.
Each breath of air that stirs the leaves wafts
music to the soul,
From every hillside, every wood, joyful echoes
roll;
Invisible wonders of thy joy greet with melody,
And Nature, all aglow with life, blesses hu-
manity.

L'ENVOI

So here's to Health, rich joyous Health, a toast
to thee I give:
That mankind may thee understand, know
thee aright—and live.

GRANNY TUCKER

Out upon Old Hickory Road, just half way
from Gray's Wood,
Backward a hundred feet or more from where
the Road Pump stood,
Where the great pines were tallest and blos-
soming vines grew wild,
Lived lonely Granny Tucker, the woman who
never smiled.

A strange pathetic figure, who hid her pale
face from you
Beneath a capacious bonnet, summer and
winter too,
No matter what the weather, or sunshine or
rain, each day
Old Granny with her pail of milk to town
would wend her way.

The children when they saw her near would
cease their noisy play,
With childish reverence and awe would bid
her a "good-day,"

And as her spare form disappeared, there still seemed to remain
The mystic presence of a soul misfortune could not tame.

The cottage, like its owner, sought seclusion from mankind,
Buried itself in the meadow where trees were thickly lined.
When in the breath of morning the lighter foliage swayed,
You caught a glimpse of chimney red or somber roof in shade.

Again, at the close of twilight, when night's deep blackness spread
Like a huge blot upon the dense foliage overhead,
A pale light struggled feebly through the garret window-pane,
And played like phantom figures o'er the dark and leafy lane.

A single whitewashed structure, one story and attic high;
A garden patch, some shrubbery, and a rude bench close by;

Wild grape smothered a poplar and ivy tendrilled the door;
A flagstone marked the threshold, worn white as the sand-swept floor.

One day there came a stranger, with hardened face and ill-kept,
Who sought out the roadside cottage after the town-folk slept;
Who hid like a beast in the jungle safe in his retreat,
Lost by baffled pursuers stealthily planning defeat.

For days he lay there in ambush, unseen by those that passed
In view of the roadside cottage with its benighted past.
When weeks had gone, at intervals he ventured out at night,
Slouched down the darkened byways, and then he was lost to sight.

Soon suspicion travelled quickly: one often heard it said
"He's Granny's son who years ago committed theft and fled."

Many weird and grotesque stories circulated
the town,
Until one day the gossips learned he'd left
for parts unknown.

Soon after that poor old Granny grew feebler
day by day,
She came to town less frequently, then ceased
to pass that way.
And then Dame Gossip wondered, inquisitively
inclined:
A spinster sought the cottage, where the trees
were thickly lined.

One glorious autumn morning, the sun, a ball
of gold,
Painted red the blushing maples upon the hill-
side cold;
The grass, still green in the meadow, recalled
the June days gone,
Larks caught the spirit of sunshine and echoed
it in song.

There, in its ominous silence, screened from
the passer-by,
Stood the old whitewashed structure one story
and attic high.

But the garden patch lay wasted, dead vines
half hid the door—
Across that flagstone threshold poor old
Granny passed no more.

THE UNFULFILLED

TEACH me, Life, thy hidden meaning—
What is all this worldly lore?
What is all this mortal seeming,
Vain desiring, more and more?

Earth has surely blessed us richly,
Yet our hopes are unfulfilled;
All the world receives the sunshine,
Longing thoughts will not be stilled.

Joy and sadness seem so kindred
We mistake them ere we know,
And desires seem to lead us
To the hilltops where they grow.

THE MAN—JOHN LYNN

A ROUGH-HEWN shack, seared by the wind and
storm's distress,
Forlorn but resolute it stands, the one witness;
A counterpart of him who sought its veiled
precinct,
This sturdy man, of rugged mien and strong
instinct.

A free retreat for one who led the freer life,
Who chose to dwell 'mid nature's haunts,
devoid of strife;
Regarding not the pride of men, nor ties, nor
blood;
His chief possessions were a gun, an axe, a dog.

He knew no want, no anxious thought—he
was supplied;
His storehouse was the wood, the stream, the
broad hillside.
He loved all creatures, and he loved his own
life well,
He killed to eat, but ne'er to barter nor to sell.

His motto was: "Despise no man; don't curse
your luck—
The meanest cur sometimes will show thor-
oughbred pluck.
Break not the law whose banner reads 'Clean
hands, play fair.'
Be not like sheep that follow one that knows
not where.

"Waste not your words, restrain your tongue
from ridicule,
Seek not the housetops to proclaim yourself
a fool."
And carved upon the weathered door, we read,
"John Lynn.
No stranger ever came to knock—my friend,
come in!"

AN ALLEGORY

Two tender little blossoms grew beside a babbling brook;
And just the other side of it an ugly, big old bush
Spread itself, and cared not if the other flowers around
Could find one tiny, airy spot beneath there on the ground
Where they might drink the soft cool breeze and sunshine from above,
Joyously greet the azure sky, and offer up their love.

But patiently they waited, and in meekness offered prayer;
While just beside them neighbor bush made sport of their ill-fare.
He thought, "Why should I offer thanks for everything that's free
To those who have the right good sense to enjoy it, like me;

And why this need of fretting oneself with all
these whims
Of penitence and prayers for pleasures they
call sins?"

But like all other wordly fools that laugh at
what is good,
He learned a lesson very soon—'twas only
just he should:
There came a gardener through the grove
who walked beside the brook;
Not taking heed, o'er bush he fell, and with
an angry look
He tore it up and in the road this selfish thing
he threw,
While th' blossoms, by the grace of God, to
lovely flowers grew.

TO THE MEMORY OF THOMAS CHATTERTON

[Thomas Chatterton was born in Bristol, England, November 20, 1752. He went to London in April, 1770. Reduced to extreme destitution, he committed suicide. His Howley poems, which he said were translations from the writings of a monk of the fifteenth century, have been the subject of much discussion. He wrote "The Tragedy of Aella," "The Battle of Hastings," "The Tournament," and several shorter poems.]

O SOUL immortal!
Blessed beyond the skies with what this earth
So cruelly denied thee, art satisfied
With thy etherial abode?
Free as the air, unchained, untrammeled
By the mighty host that with a rod of iron
Rules this earth, thy spirit now must be
Subservient to thy God alone.

At peace with self and all earth's sordid
Trials and cares; living ever on and on,
Singing to some unseen host the songs
Proud mortals would not hear;
Devoid of passion, pain, and misery;
No hungry lips, no aching brain,
No sad remorse or conscience' restless sting,

Or aught that's forged in mortal's chain of life,
Thou art delivered from them all.

But oh, how dearly bought! with thy young life,
So rich and full of promise; lavishly
Endowed by Nature with her gifts of Genius;
And all laid low upon the bosom of
Thy Mother Earth, by thine own hand,
In thy vain struggle with despair;
Without one kind imploring voice raised
To stay that sentence thou did'st welcome
Because of grim starvation.

Poor Chatterton! the more's the pity,
For thy blood doth stain humanity's name;
Dyed deep it lies, upon the history of thy time
Indelible, to the end of all mankind.

GOD'S BENEFICENCE

THE Peace of God is present in the light
That sheds its rays o'er widespread earth
and sea;
The Peace of God is in the sombre night,
And comes alike in joy or gloom to me.

The Joy of Life reflects itself in all,
And speaks to me in everything that lives;
The Joy of Life is in the sternest call,
And seen in that which nature takes or gives.

The Strength of Faith can never dim nor sway
In any seeming discords that appear,
For Faith in Truth is but another way
To find new joy in what we see and hear.

The Hope of Love, the greatest gift e'er given,
That burns the dross from every mortal life;
The Hope of Love, the very breath of heaven,
That banishes all earthly woe and strife.

"THANATOPSIS" TRANSPOSED

To HIM who loves all life, and knows 'tis God,
Oh, what a wealth of Infinite Knowledge
Is revealed. He holds the charmèd rod that
Takes the sting from out the serpent's mouth
And heals the sinful sense of self-inflicted wounds.
When darkness like a pall causes thee to shudder,
And tempting thoughts of fear hang like
Threatening clouds across thy horizon;
Turn erring thoughts away from mortal self.
Let Infinite Mind, the One Intelligence,
Illumine thee with truer thoughts of life;
To know that earth is but a stepping-stone
To higher things.

The still small voice that says to thee "fear not"
Shall prove thee one with Life's eternity.
Just a little while, and the sun
Shall be no more thy light by day,
Nor shall the moon o'er darkness shed its ray,
For God, the One Divine Intelligence,
Shall be the light thereof.

The Adam dream of life
Shall be resolved to dust again and lost
Each mortal trace, surrendering thine own
False sense, to be condemned to nothingness.
Grand potentates of earth that worship power,
And those that follow the ignoble train,
Shall all be levelled to one common plane
And be redeemed through Mind's enlightenment.
The trees that shelter thee from heat and storm,
That add much beauty to this earth you know;
The brooks that play throughout the quiet woods,
And soothe the feverish sense with harmony;
The hills that give a lofty thought to things,
That rib the meadows with their oaks and pines,
Are emblems of this One and Only Mind.

These shall you see again some day, not as
You see them now through darkened thought,
But clothed in Godlike grandeur—all for Man.
The multitudes that tread this earth are but
A mite to that vast host that lives unseen.
Go where thou wilt, away to desert plains
Or barren solitudes of arctic lands,
Life is there. Since first the ebb of time began
The vanity of human kind has reigned,

Pursuing pleasures that but phantoms proved;
And each upon his way must leave behind
The cherished things that to this earth would
bind.
The babe cannot remain a babe forever,
To hide itself upon its mother's breast;
Nor should the maid be curtailed at expectancy.
Impartial is the hand that gives all time,
And stamps the present with eternity.
All the innumerable tribes that
Have passed the portal of this mortal dream
(Beyond the veil of unenlightened thought)
Are no more privileged than you and I,
For all must realize that Life is God,
The One Intelligence, the only Power.

THE INVISIBLE ARMY

WHAT voices these, like whispers from the dead,
Come floating from stars shining overhead?
What music this, that charms in spite of woe,
That makes my pulses thrill, my heart to glow?
What choir's singing praises to God on high?
What means this sombre light? — dark is the sky.

Struck dumb I stand with admiration bound,
While through the dark wood comes a rumbling sound
As of an army, from some foreign land,
Marching, marching swiftly to music grand,
Never, never nearer, though ever nigh,
Lighted but by stars twinkling in the sky.

Hark! Now they come with madness in each breath —
Can their sudden fury portend quick death?
Now it slackens; as by some given word
Each one halts quickly, not a sound is heard.
What means it? Is it trickery or distress?
This appalling quiet — all things motionless.

I know not what—for lo! they start again,
Their queer manœuvres rise and fall the same;
The marching to weird music of their band,
The tramping and the rumbling o'er the land;
The mad, furious rushing as to death;
And after—deep silence, and night's soft
breath.

THE WAY OF LIFE

HEAR ye the cry
That breaks upon the stillness of the morn?
And know ye why?
'Tis the voice of a soul that has been born,
This fateful morn,
To live—then die.

To drink Life's cup—
An unknown portion forced upon those lips—
To the last drop,
Whose contents it must drain, as it now sips,
With paining lips,
Each living drop.

Bitter or sweet,
It matters not; inevitable now
As Death's grim sleep
Is Life: with joy and sadness it may flow,
Or soon ebb low
Again, in sleep.

What e'er its fate—
Life long or short as measured by the years—
'T is now too late
For sad repining, for shedding our tears,
Or voicing fears—
Closed is the Gate.

UNRECOGNIZED

Our greatest thoughts are seldom known.
They come, and swiftly pass from sight,
Like meteors flashing 'cross the night,
Unmindful, and we wonder why—
It was God's presence passing by.

AN IDEAL

Rose-tinted, hued by the kiss of love;
Blushing pink, where life's breath still lies
Dewy wet upon thy lips; I see it there
Reflected on thy cheeks, painted by an angel's hand.
As fragrant as a perfumed breeze
Blown from out a hyacinth's bed;
As modest as the first shy glance
Of the morning's sun upon a placid stream;
Rest and peacefulness in every thought of thee;
A calm ethereal happiness that knows
Not earth nor man, no noon or night but always morn;
Music that charms the soul to sleep,
And soothes each weary sense to rest;
That wipes away the sting of bitter thoughts,
And binds the wounds of harrassed flesh.
Thy breath, like perfume to foul air,
Doth ever come when suffocation
Seems inevitable.

Never was mortal richer blessed than I,
The worshipper of thy soul. The bee that sips

The honey from the flowers knows naught so
sweet,
Or half so pure, as one short moment in thy
presence.
Thou whom I behold with closèd eyes alone,
The richest gift that e'er to man was given,
Art mine to love on earth and cherish in heaven.
Buried deep within my heart I guard thee
With a miser's care. Till mortal flesh, released
from bondage,
Weary of the ties that bind me to this life,
Seeks a higher sphere in which to dwell.
Then alone will I wait to be delivered unto
That heavenly host, where, stripped of mortal
garments soiled,
Free and immaculate, I will stand
Face to face with a soul I knew on earth to be,
But could not find.

SPRING HAS COME

SPRING has come! and with its budding
Bud the hopes of new-born joys;
Spring has come! and with its coming
Live the hopes that life enjoys.

Spring has come! and with its coming
Songs we hear from every tree;
Spring has come! and with it beauty,
Born to bless both you and me.

Spring has come! with glad awak'ning
Life peeps forth from bladed sod;
Spring has come! the whole world knows it,
Every instinct proclaims GOD.

IN OUR BACK YARD

In spring the blossoms, white and gold,
Their baby-faces, manifold,
Smiled down from lofty heights o'erhead
And their refreshing fragrance spread
O'er our back yard.

In spring the tiny shoots peeped forth;
The gravel walk from south to north
With tender spirals (pale green threads)
Was sentinelled by myriad heads
In our back yard.

Beside the fence the violets bloomed,
All day bees o'er the blossoms crooned,
And when the evening shadows fell
I lingered in the peaceful spell
Of our back yard.

In spring I'd plan for summer near,
Watch the dull schooldays disappear,

Oft test the strength of our new swing,
Picture what the summer would bring
In our back yard.

And when July's sun cast its heat
Upon pedestrians on the street,
I'd lazily enjoy the shade,
And wonder how this world was made,
In our back yard.

When summer showers earthward sped
I sought protection in the shed;
Climbed high upon the big woodpile
And watched the clouds roll mile on mile
O'er our back yard.

And as the hot days ripened corn,
Matronly August came along
With peaches twice the size your fist,
Blushing deep red by sunshine kissed,
In our back yard.

When grave September claimed its own
I grieved for th' loved summer flown;
The roses drooped, the leaves fell dry,
There seemed a sadness in the sky
O'er our back yard.

With summer gone, vacation o'er,
I loved that playground more and more;
And as I planned for winter near
I wished that spring might soon appear
In our back yard.

HIDDEN MEANINGS

S-W-I-S-H, s-w-i-s-h—thus beat the waves upon
the shore;
Restless in their wild persistence,
Constant in their craving more.

S-w-i-s-h, s-w-i-s-h—worldly voices ever crying,
Ever noisy in imploring,
Born in craving and desiring.

Thus throughout the mortal dreamland
Come and fade the thoughts we think,
Voices ever keyed to action,
Then into oblivion sink.

THE OLD SWIMMING POOL

How well I remember the old swimming pool,
On hot afternoons, quiet and cool,
A pool of water clear as the sky,
Fed by a brook that babbled near by.

Ah, well I remember how swiftly we'd dive
Straight to the bottom and there count five,
Bob to the surface with eyes of joy,
Sputter of conquest — dare any boy.

How well I remember, one vacation morn,
We all agreed to be up at dawn;
How I lay awake through the long night
Watching to catch the first gleam of light.

How well I remember I tiptoed the floor,
Quietly crouched with ear to the door,
Listening intently; when satisfied,
Downstairs, half clad, dad's commands defied.

How well I remember our first morning's lark;
In the semi-light the pool seemed dark.

Stripping off our clothes, the first undressed
Plunged in head-first followed by the rest.

How well I remember, when I arrived home
Mother was anxious, waiting alone;
Instead of something I thought I'd get
I saw a smile, a look of regret.

THE OLD SCHOOLHOUSE

THE old schoolhouse upon the hill,
How oft' I've heard that rhyme;
Yet my schoolhouse is standing still
Upon the selfsame terraced hill,
More picturesque with time.

Its broad façade of reddish brick
A deeper hue has grown;
Outlined windows with ivy thick
Reveal nature's wonder trick
In such a wondrous gown.

Two flights of stairs of six steps each
Lead to the entrance way,
Where young maidens I romped with teach,
And strange faces I would beseech
To smile at me today.

But where are Tom and John and Ned,
To join me in my play?
Memory tells me John is dead;
But as for Tom, and grand old Ned—
Just idle thoughts today.

SONGS OF A VAGABOND

A RAGGED vagabond am I, adrift on Life's great sea,
Never a kind word comes my way, no one e'er cares for me;
A wretched mortal to behold, accused by all mankind,
"The scum of earth," 'tis often said, and well, I have opined;
And yet I question if 'tis true, in weighing pro and con,
That what makes the real man is the raiment he puts on,
The things he proudly calls his own, that are no part of him.

The biped with commanding mien whom we so often meet,
Whose grip we feel upon our throats, strutting along life's street.
Or he who with well-fed content ne'er knows of want or woe,
But glides into the harbor calm before the stiff winds blow.

I know them all for what they seem, and what
they really are,
And, knowing, feel no envious sting; no subtle
thought can mar
The greater license I enjoy—the world belongs
to me.

To you intrenched within four walls and
stifled overhead,
Who count yourselves a happy lot, living amid
the dead,
To you, deceived by wealth and fame, ensnared
by pride and greed,
Before your altars, long defiled, I know 'tis
vain to plead.
And so I sing my songs to Life, to every bird
and tree;
Beneath the broad and open sky, farther than
eye can see,
The herald of glad tidings comes, and blesses
earth and me.

Each morning brings to me its dawn, its sun-
shine or its rain;
A varied picture I behold—its message very
plain;
Rich with the beauty of rare gems sparkles
the field and hill,

With plastic coloring the sky, in every hue
a thrill;
And all throughout the day I go o'er country
far and wide,
Wherever fancy leads me, there at nightfall I
abide,
In care-free rest I soon forget hunger and
weariness.

A Day in Spring

Morning

The spring has come, and all sweet budding
things
Are peeping forth with faces shining bright;
The smell of pungent earth is in the air;
The sky turns gray-blue in the sun's strong
light.
The blades of tender grass I trample down
Reproach me in a most appealing way;
Upon the fence-post, where all eyes can see,
A robin voices praises of the day.

Within the freshness of the early morn,
Bathed in the beauty that the light has brought,
The purity of earthly things is seen
In the hallowed sense of uplifted thought.

I feel so thankful for the warm sunshine,
The ever-changing beauty of the sky,
I now forget the hardships of my life
And feel but peace and sweet tranquility.

Noon

The world is one bright dream today,
And whispers to me hope and joy;
The sun in all its radiance shines,
The same as when I was a boy.
I cannot tell you what it is,
This something that transforms the earth,
That warms the cold sod under foot
And to transcending thoughts gives birth.

A smile of friendship everywhere
Unites mankind in one proud race,
Changing the hard ignoble thoughts
To something more than commonplace;
That elevates our carnal sense
To higher thoughts of self than shame,
And like the breath of spring revives
What bitter coldness cannot claim.

Night

Out in the friendly field I lie, with eyes fixed
on the sky,
Counting the stars that blink and flash like
diamonds up so high.
And as I look, with thoughts intent, to solve
life's mystery,
These myriad sparkling hosts of night seem
living souls to be.

The history of ages past is here for all to read,
Recording good and misspent lives, that all
may know and heed;
Illumined with the spark of love, unchiding
in appeal,
Beckoning ever to the world, with an untiring
zeal.

And as mankind, since time began, is here in
splendor bright,
And as the stars with piercing eyes look down
through darkest night
Into the hearts of mortal men, derelicts, mis-
taken,
They see the same vast struggling tribe love
can not awaken.

The Despoiled Field

I labored in the field today—
At break of dawn work was begun;
We shocked the wheat until high noon,
Under a hot relentless sun.
Great waves of heat rose from the earth
Like active spirit things released;
A hush hung o'er the midday hour,
All labor in the fields had ceased.

The grass along the hillside lay
Crisp and sear as a baker's bun;
The cows that browsed there in the morn
Had deserted the cattle run;
Only the sound of rustling grain
As the heat of the sun beat down;
No living thing the eye could see,
To the forests the birds had flown.

How merciless, severe, unkind
These earthly elements can be!
I questioned what mankind had done
To merit such severity.
My thoughts rebelled at man's sad lot—
This sowing, toiling, harvesting—
For human wants are petty things,
Ill desired, vain, distressing.

This sacrifice I weigh today
It mocks me as a fool's attempt;
I think of many yesterdays,
Of childhood days in hardship spent.
Friends and kindred I scarce recall,
I hunger for some kindly face—
To me what means this harvest time
But fields made barren and laid waste.

On the Road

The hours dragged painfully today, as slow as
dripping glue,
Hunger gripped me with its fangs and to me
all things looked blue;
There wasn't enough of sunshine left to fill
an old tin can—
Humanity, as seen by me, was a barbarian.

I started wrong by asking alms—and miscal-
culated;
The indignities heaped on me sorely irritated.
I kicked the dust upon the road for two long
miles or more,
Then sat me down beside a creek, and took
a drink, and swore.

My thoughts went back to other days to brighter days of youth,
To teachings of the better life taught in the Book of Truth.
I still recalled one story well—I never shall forget
The first time that I heard it read, how bitterly I wept.

How a Pharisee and Sinner to temple went one day,
And there within its sacred walls both stood up to pray.
The Pharisee informed his god, in some strange land afar,
That he was thankful that he was not as other men are—

Extortioners, adulterers, or as the Publican,
And gloried in the thought he was so good and just a man.
The Publican, with head bent low, but smote upon his breast,
Cried out to God to mercy show—the Sinner he confessed.

Remorseful thoughts and bitter ones enwrapped me all too soon,

Transformed the brightness of the sun to a
dull murky noon.
The clouds that gathered overhead looked
threateningly at me;
I saw the toilers in the fields, alert, like men
at sea.

A suddn clap of thunder warned — rolled
grumblingly away,
And ere the cock's crow spent itself, faded
the light of day;
A blackened roaring mass o'erhead showered
its missiles down,
With wind-swept fury hurried on, o'er field
and hill and town.

All day the lowering clouds dispelled half-
blinding misting rains.
All afternoon, in storm-drenched clothes, I
trudged through soggy lanes,
And travelled far o'er heavy roads to town —
five miles by rail —
Where I might earn some food, and then for-
get earth's sad travail.

Reward of Toil

Today I sawed a pile of wood,
It must have been a cord or more!
And when I ripped the last piece through
My weary arms and legs felt sore.
Yet something in that heaping pile
Renewed a certain strength within;
It bore the thought of self-respect—
Left peace where bitterness had been.

How good to hold within your hand
The just reward for labor done!
Perhaps you've never felt this blest
Emotion of the lowly one.
I looked across the spacious yard
To barns that told of lives well spent—
The efforts of efficient years,
A wonderful accomplishment.

Along the dusty road a boy
Was driving cattle homeward bound;
The wayward ones he held at bay
With sticks and stones that he had found.
Across the kitchen threshold came
The comely housewife needing wood;
With apron full she soon returned—
A splendid type of womanhood.

The slanting shadows on the green
Grew longer while I stood out there;
The sun lay trapped behind a veil,
A faint chill crept upon the air;
The swallows whisked by overhead,
And recklessly they ventured nigh;
From out the blackened chimney rose
A ribboned stream against the sky.

The vast denuded fields of grain
Bespoke of harvests gleaned and stored;
The forests and the distant plains,
Untilled and many unexplored,
Like distant voices in the night
Were calling unto me to come—
"The persevering win the fight,
No weak or fickle ever won!"

This voice traversed the span of years
Through blood of ancestry to me,
With strong conviction plead its cause
And spoke with marked sincerity.
I saw the weakling that I was,
A blinded victim of caprice,
Convinced that to pursue my way
Would lead me to a precipice.

When darkness closed a long, long day,
I sought again an old familiar shed
Where I might lie within the quiet there,
And rest my body and my aching head.
The wind howled mournfully around the shack,
The flying clouds obscured the star-lit sky;
I squeezed myself into a hidden space,
Unmindful of October's doleful sigh.

I sank at once into a restless sleep,
With broken spells of worry and unrest,
Half conscious of a fretful, barking dog
That persisted my presence to protest.
Close to the door he poked his nose and
growled
And sniffed the air, this very wise Airedale—
I knew him well, and when he heard his name
He came to me wagging his stubby tail.

Though weary and discouraged with my lot,
My heart responded to my oldtime friend;
If human beings were but half so kind
The heartaches of this life would surely end.
Life in my eyes was one long pilgrimage,
A struggle with the sins existence brought;

I wondered in my own bewildered way
What selfish hand these heavy chains had
wrought.

I sought the meaning of these craving
thoughts,
The constant yearning for some recompense,
The emptiness of all these earthly hopes
That brought me only shattered confidence.

. . . . . .

My thoughts recalled congested city streets,
The coming hardships with the summer done,
The long cold nights that crowded shortened
days —
I bade old haunts good-bye with rising sun.

IN COMMUNION

SILENT, secluded, behind a rugged wall,
Like a stubble partly hidden in the grass,
Stands the old house, a deserted banquet hall,
Where leafy oak trees, majestic, sombre, tall,
Screen the glaring dusty road from view
And add sweet coolness to the heat of noon.
Here I lingered upon one summer day,
And flicked the weeds that in abundance grew;
And as I crunched the mossy bricks 'neath foot,
The stillness of the place grew denser still,
And reached the zenith of oppression.

Here once again I sip the nectar of old days,
Here watch the sunbeams as they dart across
the green
Like daring, prancing nymphs in a web of haze,
To spend themselves like breakers on the shore.
And looking far into the distant fields of grain,
Rolling ever nearer like an undulating sea,
I feel the mighty hand of Life revealed,
And recognize infinitude in God's name.

A VISION

I STAND upon a threshold, from whence I
behold
The light of unseen day; golden sunbeams chase
Each other hither and thither, and falling upon
A fountain's spray, blossom with prismatic
coloring;
The dewy mist adds freshness to the perfumed
air,
The healthy glow of life intoxicates.
From every hand the most exquisite music
emanates,
And as it falls with silvery rhythm upon my ears
I see the heavenly choir, as one grand mighty
soul,
To which my humble spirit seems attuned.

TO AN IDEAL

I HEAR the music of thy voice,
It charms with touch divine;
To me it sounds like some lost chord,
Or grand poetic rhyme.

It whispers in the darkened hour,
When life seems sore distressed;
It comes when in the grind of toil
I find myself oppressed.

It stills when vain desires would sway,
It beats temptation down;
It lifts to heights from whence I see
The glory I would own.

It conquers where else I would fail,
Assures the better thing;
Ennobles by its pure desire,
Uplifts by vanquishing.

It brings a peace of other days
Of days that are to come;
It ripples down the path of time,
And breathes of God's will done.

AT THE DANCE

A TREMBLING of the violin,
  A few notes from the flute;
The harp and clarionet join in,
  The drum till now so mute
Strikes boldly, as the proud cornet
  Soars high above the strain —
A look, a word, and in my arms
  I hold my love again.

I feel the flutter of her heart,
  Her breath upon my cheek;
The perfume from her golden hair —
  Ah, worldly cares grow weak.
I hear the music of her soul,
  A melody divine,
And through the mazes of the dance
  Her spirit glides with mine.

A MEMORY

Thou cam'st to me again today,
In full-orbed glory, as of yore;
With smiles of youth and sweet content,
And roguish eyes 'pon pleasure bent,
And as I heard thee call my name
My startled thoughts cried out "Elaine!"

And when I clasped thee in mine arms
The earth clouds seemed to fade away;
I dreamed that heaven had opened wide,
That I was swept on with the tide,
And visions until then unknown
Were crystallized into mine own.

I saw thee then as ne'er before;
My Queen that thou hast always been,
Unfolding, as a budding flower,
New grace and beauty every hour;
And hallowed in more serious thought
Thy love a thousand fancies brought.

The glories of those golden days
Make rich this aftermath of years,

With youth that breathes to me of spring
And makes this hour a blessed thing:
That life should still unfold to me
The grace of such a memory.

THE LAW

A VOICE is calling from the hilltops, "Come!"
It bears a message in the quiet hour;
I hear it in the hush of midnight sleep;
It comes to me when clouds o'er noonday lower,
When pleasures make the foolish senses weak.

It ever bids me, ever urges, "Come!"
It never falters in its strong appeal;
It never wearies, though I turn away—
As constant as the very breath I feel.
It is the Law of Life — and I obey.

THE VOICE OF FREEDOM

TRUTH came to Youth and whisper'd in his ear
And called to him, "Awake, for I am here."
And Youth, still drowsy, rubbed his eyes and
blinked,
A bit perturbed
To have his rest disturbed.

And, with a scowl upon his brow, inquired:
"And who art thou—what was it you desired?"
And Truth, all active, instantly replied:
"Love me and live,
A thousand joys I give.

"Health, Strength, and Wisdom, Love and
Chastity,
Of all my gifts, the last is Charity;
Her face is plain, but on her head
(Lest thou forget)
A diadem is set."

And, as Youth listened to the wonders told,
His eyes grew eager and his manner bold;

He counted all his gains, and ill replied:
"Behold and see
The talents I bring thee."

And Youth went on ungratefully to state
Gross vanities, too foolish to relate;
Impulsive thoughts that vain ambition feed,
A grim satire
On noble Life's desire.

Truth, considerate of his tender age,
Bade him again to claim his heritage,
His Sonship to th' one Omnipotent Life;
Passion subdue
And to himself be true.

That Health and Strength would follow Chastity.
And Love entreated, "I will fast with thee."
And Love's entreaty was not made in vain —
Youth's eyes grew bright,
And shone with heav'nly light.

How strange, thought Youth, how strange and yet how true,
This dear old friend that comes to me anew,
With songs of gladness making bright the day
With miles and miles
Of Life's radiant smiles.

And Youth grew happy with his new-found friend,
And, as a Sir Knight in an old legend,
Bore love and romance wherever he went.
Hail, joyous Youth,
And friends, Life, Love, and Truth.

And Health and Strength ne'er forsook him a day,
For to Life and Love and Truth he would pray.
And for blessings to him constantly shown,
Gratitude voiced
And silently rejoiced.

Thus Youth traveled onward, joyous with song
Throughout the whole day, 'till dusk came along,
And threw o'er his pathway beside a steep hill
What would appear
A deep shadow of fear.

Youth in bewilderment lost sight of Love;
The cry of the nighthawk rose from above.
And as the gray darkness gave way to grim black
Love sent the Moon
To penetrate the gloom.

In the deep stillness a spectre arose —
'T was Sleep; and straightway tired Youth he chose;

With skill so subtle, with tenderest concern,
To Youth he said
"In my arms make thy bed."

And Youth found solace with Sleep for a while.
Pleasurable fancies brought to him a smile;
Coquettish faces toyed with him in play,
With strange dances
And bewitching glances.

A new Love appeared now to welcome him
In dazzling brightness of temptation, Sin,
So unlike the old Love with noble Grace
And Purity
And sweet Security.

Soon reckless Desire ensnared with dismay,
Passion urged him onto destruction's way;
The spell of her eyes, her music of laughter,
Feigned caresses,
Enslaved with distresses.

Sensual pleasures grew irksome at last,
His new Love became a sorrowful past;
Envy ensnared him — Self-pity crept in —
Blacker the night
As the Moon hid from sight.

But Truth, ever constant, spoke as of yore,
"Arise, and behold new fields to explore."
Youth, with a shudder, refused to obey,
Oped not his eyes
Till Love bade him arise.

Then in the new light of true Purity
He beheld the fair face of Charity.
Then did vain Youth for the first time aspire
To understand
What Infinite Life had planned.

THE STILL SMALL VOICE

I HEARD a voice within my heart
That seemed to say, in accents sweet,
"Love me, or I will soon depart;
To lose me is to court defeat."

I wondered what this voice could be,
This voice I learned to know so well,
That now and then would speak to me,
And worldly longings would dispel.

Ofttimes it came throughout the years,
And many times it came in vain.
One day, when burdened with dark fears,
I chanced to learn its wondrous name.

When sorrow held me fast in gloom,
And thoughts played havoc with my youth,
I cried to it in life's high noon,
And heard the answer: "I am Truth."

THE OLD, OLD STORY

LONG years ago, a man did sing a song
Into the ears of one for whom I mourn.
She heard the wondrous story that he told,
A tale so tender, yet withal so bold,
Her gentle nature shrank, yet bade him stay
To hear again the words he sang that day.

With magic skill he sang his song once more;
Tenderly, passionately as before;
He drew her closer in his warm embrace,
His lips sought hers he kissed her upturned face,
And then — well, 'tis the reason why I may
Sing the same love song that he sang that day.

EILEEN

She came to me, it seemed, from heaven,
When I was six, or maybe seven,
A tiny thing with golden curls,
And clear blue eyes like deep-sea pearls—
The most beloved of all the girls.

She laughed her way into my heart,
This little girl, so cute, so smart;
An innocence that now concealed
A power later years revealed,
That oft in infancy appealed.

With boyish pride I watched her grow
To the age of five or six or so,
And then, well then 'twas always "Ray,
You must do this, you must I say,
'Cause Eileen wants it, dear, dear Ray."

Perhaps a trip with rod and hook
To the millrace, or to the brook,
Where to her knees she'd wade and play,
Then teasingly would cry, "Oh, Ray,
Hurry or I'll be washed away!"

And then upon my back she'd crawl,
And pull my hair, and bid me fall,
And scream when I pretended to,
And slap my cheek—because I'd do
Just what she always asked me to.

Sometimes I'd scold her just for fun,
And if she thought she'd hurt me some
The smile would vanish from her face,
Her hand would seek my hand's embrace,
And sympathy would flush her face.

Thus I remember her, dear child—
Playful, serious, roguish, wild;
Ever ready to mischief brew,
Yet always gentle, always true,
A winning way that soon won you.

'Twas but a step from boy of ten
To the age of sixteen, and then
The fleeting years sped faster still;
School days and their studies instilled
New ambitions to be fulfilled.

The years sped on, school days were o'er,
Life marked my age at twenty-four,
And early manhood untried, untrue,
And passions that one would subdue
My nobler senses tried to woo.

The untamed spirit of unrest
Bred discontent within my breast,
And all those happy days of yore,
Days the heart oft hungered for,
Returned to pain me more and more.

I marked the interval that lay
Between the old life and that day:
What I had dreamed, what I had done,
How much was lost, how little won,
How life ebbed with the setting sun.

I travelled far to distant lands
To satisfy each whim's commands;
At last to find naught else to do
But homeward sail—perchance to woo
A girl long years ago I knew.

The sun poured down its golden rays,
The ocean danced, the distant haze
Gave way, and then home land appeared,
And, gliding onward, soon we neared
Our native shores by love endeared.

'Twas joy to see again that home;
And yet what peace to be alone—
To seek the meadows where we played,
The old hillside within whose shade
My boyhood vows to her I made.

To tread the ground where oft I trod,
Where she followed with fishing-rod,
Beating the briars from her dress,
Or stooping perchance to caress
A flower crushed in eagerness.

To see again the commons where
I tossed the ball high in the air,
And strove with boyish pride and might
The leather sphere, for her delight,
To catch upon its downward flight.

Late afternoons to hurry hence
To sit upon that battered fence
And watch the kite, a birdlike thing,
Soar skyward with two bolts of string
And Eileen holding fast the ring.

To watch the sunlight 'pon the trees
Flit playfully amid the leaves,
To breathe again the perfumed air
Of lilac trees, a giant pair
That grew beneath her window there.

The gabled roof, the trellised vines,
The porch half-hidden by two great pines,
The broad expanse of sloping lawn—
Where oft I played throughout the morn—
Belovèd home where she was born.

I dreamed I heard her merry talk
As up the garden path I walked;
I hesitated on the way—
"How to greet her—what would she say?"
Each second seemed an hour's delay.

With stubborn will I whipped despair.
A second more and I was there,
And then my steps were swiftly stayed—
Upon that porch where oft we played
A vision rose—a lovely maid.

I looked, I saw, I disbelieved;
Dreamed I or were my eyes deceived—
Where had I seen such girlish grace,
That smile which time could not displace?
It surely was dear Eileen's face.

Her eyes searched mine with eager quest;
One look, one word, and in my breast
A love was born—a love had fled,
The love of boyhood days was dead,
Something unknown had come instead.

She seemed to see, with one swift glance,
My soul upon my countenance;
She gave to me her hand, and when
She looked into my eyes—ah, then
I saw the light of heav'n again.

GREETINGS

'Tis "Good morning" to the friend we meet
When the day is young, when life is sweet.

"Good day," to him in the noon of life,
In the zenith of this great world's strife.

"Good afternoon," when the hours speed
Into the evening we little heed.

"Good evening," when the day has fled,
When existence hangs upon a thread.

And then "Good night," just a stifled sigh,
A sad, faint smile, and the last "good-bye."

GLADSOME YESTERDAYS

How often in the stillness of the night,
When restless thoughts the weary one would rob
Of pleasures that prospective life still holds,
When with much thinking, aching temples throb
And all that once seemed good lies shipwrecked in
A mighty flood of bitter tears and woe—
How often then from out the hidden depths
There breathes the spirit of the long ago.
Recalling days when faith in good was kept,
When virtue ne'er into the mire stepped,
But, jubilant with youthful pleasures, trod
The pathways fragrant with the breath of God.

The room where once you said your nightly prayers,
Where maternal hands with much tenderness
Smoothed the tousled hair from your heated brow,
And lingered fondly for one last caress.
When all was still, how oft, with closèd eyes

That sleep would feign, you heard her noiseless tread,
And in the light that flickered soft and low
Felt those kind hands arrange the crumpled spread,
And cuddling close within the darkened room,
Devoid of thoughts that later life distress,
Peacefully to slumber until the dawn
Your dreamy eyes awakened from sweet rest.

And in those later days of boyhood, when
She was relieved of duties and home cares,
When evening came and off to bed you must,
How boisterously you bounded up the stairs.
And lying there, with coverlet tucked in,
Tugging with the spread pulled up to your chin,
Perhaps to dream of great tales you had read:
Of Bluebeard, or of Cogia Houssain,
Who, masking as a friend, Ali Baba
And his noble son surely would have slain.
Nights when the April rain, with steady beat
Drummed hard upon the tin roof overhead;
How well you loved to listen to the noise
While idle thoughts away with Morpheus sped,
Or when the August moon with subtle grace
Through the half ope'd shutters thrust its bright face,

Painting the matting with its golden light,
What dreams you nourished in its transient
flight,
When wakeful ears, alert to every sound,
Discerned the distant barking of a hound.
Breathlessly to steal 'cross the creaking floor
With timid hands to bolt safely the door,
And in increased security to partake
Of youthful pleasures that such hours awake.

Out of the night to see myriad eyes
Rising to greet thy faithful countenance,
Whisp'ring tidings of yet happier days
Than fiction ever pictured love's romance.
Within the vision of some noble deed
You dreamed of then your boyhood thoughts
would feed,
And standing there within the soothing light,
Holding communion in the hallowed night,
How peaceful grew your spirit in the calm,
Soothed to rest by some grand nocturnal psalm.

There below, where a few hours since you
played,
The darkened street, so breathless, seemed
dismayed.
Upon the crossing, destitute of life,

A grotesque sentinel, in subdued light,
Stood the same pump which creaked throughout the day,
Stricken dumb by the magic spell of night.
Far beyond the vast receding housetops,
Hidden then from view, the broad country lay,
A mysterious land as seen by night,
Though oft you tramped its well-known fields by day.

And as you dream of all those happy hours,
Rich with a wealth of sacred memories,
How idle seem the bitter tears you shed,
How blest your life with gladsome yesterdays.

THE SOUL'S AWAKENING

WHEN Autumn's flood-gates, open wide,
Make way for strong emotions' tide,
Sweeping the country, low and high,
With bitter tears and winds that sigh;
Moaning through leafless trees that stand
Denuded of Earth's garments grand,
And when the frost upon the sod
In its devastation has robbed
Every flower of its bloom—
I stop to think of mortals' doom.

Is it thus our day will end?
Or that we may apprehend,
By the winter months to come,
That our journey's not yet done;
Only resting through the night,
To awake and find the light,
That this warning is sent now?
Yes, my soul, it is that thou,
When awakened with the Spring
May again thy praises sing.

LE PRINTEMPS

To thee, to thee, O glorious Spring,
Whose transcendent beauty I drink in,
With ecstasy thy praise I sing,
And hear the echoes as they bring
My praises back to thee, O Spring.

To thee, to thee, thou child of today,
Born unto earth this early May day,
To sorrow still and grief allay,
With new-born hopes and dreams today,
All bitter thoughts to turn away.

With adolescent pleasures dost fill,
And yet with deeper feelings instill
My rapturous soul; for, tranquil
As the clouds that sleep o'er the hill,
I feel life peaceful, restful, still.

Like minor chords, thy sweet melodies
Are blended with pleasant memories
Of other days; a euphony
Awakened in the sanctity
Of this new life born unto me.

Before me lies the river, calm, blue,
In each breath a kiss, that speaks of you
With moistened lips; reflected too
The sky within its deep, deep blue
Wears a softer, a richer hue.

The forest whispers, while here I stand,
Thy eulogies; and over the land,
In one long voiced acclaim, a band
Of merry songsters, all command
Attention; while on every hand

Efflorescent trees and budding vine,
The redolent air and warm sunshine,
Humble daisies that interline
The earth's green canopy, combine
To adorn lavish Nature's shrine.

A SUMMER DAY

To LIE within the shade of some old tree,
To watch the sunbeams, far and near to thee,
O'erspread with golden canopy each field and hill;
To feel pulsating, throbbing life grow peaceful still,
And there alone commune with Nature and thy God.

To hear no sound except the faintest note,
A whispered prayer perchance, from the throat
Of some secluded songster in a far-off tree,
Who, with songs of gratitude on his lips, like thee
Worships all that makes this life so beloved to him.

To feel the breeze that now and then above,
Amid the dense green foliage, sigh its love,
Steal gently o'er thy slumbers, mingle with thy hair,
Kiss thy brow and upturned face, and upon the air,
Ere thy dreamy eyes are ope'd, swiftly disappear.

To watch the placid stream peacefully course
Its sinuous way, until it is lost
Within the shady depths of yonder forest glade;
And then in fancy travel onward, or let fade
Its memory in the birth of other visions.

In thoughts that wing their way to clouds
that rest
High in the heavens, o'er the mountain's
crest,
And there to people, from thy bewildering
height,
The earth and universe with unrestrained
delight,
And dream—at peace with self, with heaven
and earth, and man.

HOPE

Oh, speak to me, thou winsome voice
That ever and anon I hear;
Oh, speak to me, and cheer me now—
I long to feel thy presence near.

Thou bring'st to me a sense of joy
That turns my thoughts to nobler things,
A more exalted view of life
That to my inmost being sings.

Raising mine eyes above the mud
To outstretched heavens overhead,
And all creation seems anew
A resurrection from the dead.

A VACATION REVERIE

I AWAKE, 'tis morning; a flood of light
Through the dark latticed windows streams
so bright
That I, half dreaming still, quickly arise,
Bewildered at what these low moaning cries
I hear can mean. I look about me "Strange,"
Think I, "the room and all that it contains
I've never seen, and yet"—I laugh outright
In recollecting all. It was last night,
Arriving here late, wearied and worn out
(Regardless of everything about)
I threw myself upon the bed, where sleep
A prisoner in fair dreamland did keep
Me so safely guarded. And now released,
Refreshed with new vigor, "Behold the feast
That awaits thine eyes," says a voice without.
Opening the blind, with a merry shout
I greet a fair songster that takes his flight,
Leaving me alone, entranced with delight.
Below lies the river, from which the mist
Rises heavenward to meet the soft kiss
Of the morning sun. Just southward, ahead

Of yonder strong dam, a turbulent bed
Of white foamy billows speed madly on,
While the old mill, forsaken and forlorn,
Stands silently by. Then turning my gaze
Far to the east through the vanishing haze
I see great stretches of farmlands and roads
Leading to towns with their many abodes.
While away to the north, rising so high,
Forest-covered bluffs against the pale sky
Look like great giants of fairy-tale fame,
Risen from their tombs to new life again;
Their sonorous voices my keen ears hear
With wonderment, mingled with childlike fear,
Such as I felt when on grandmother's knee
I sat and listened, amazed at what she
Must have beheld in those days of the past
When knights were valiant—red blood ran fast.

While fancies like these swiftly come and go
(Upon the tide of thought), I see below
The river, sparkling now, fully aglow
With the sun's bright rays, that bring to mine
eyes
A bewildering sense. I think of skies
I've seen crowded with stars, and looking down
Fancy into those bright depths must have blown
That effulgent host — while I stood alone.

AN OLD ROMANCE

A YOUTH whose life, in folly spent,
  Now left him in despair,
His weary heart with sorrow rent,
  Which time would not repair.

More restless grew he day by day,
  Until, all wrapt in gloom,
He longed for death to take away
  From him this sadness soon.

So morning into evening turned;
  Night followed on its course;
And still the life within him burned,
  Fanned by its own remorse.

But soon, ah, soon the day was near
  Upon which hung his fate,
Which made life still to him so dear,
  To cherish for love's sake.

It was one night in early June,
  'Midst everything so fair,
That love to him did come so soon,
  Before he was aware.

So strong a light the moon's gold ray
  Did shed upon the scene,
The brook itself in rapture lay
  Sparkling beneath its gleam.

Bright stars grew pale within the sky,
  Yet sparkled now and then,
As if in longing to defy
  This fairer one of them.

Upon the air a mellow strain
  Of music soft he heard,
Which fell not on bis ears in vain—
  He cherished every word.

A voice so soft and rich in tone
  Her soul expression gave,
And on her face a smile there shone
  Like moonbeams on a wave.

Such calmness, yet such sadness, too,
  Her dainty features blessed,
The reflection seen was so true
  He ne'er before witnessed.

His hungry soul, as it drank in
  One long deep draught from hers,
Relieved the heart that long within
  Was bleeding from life's burrs.

And then he dreamed of years gone by,
When childlike love and trust
Made earth one brilliant, sparkling sky,
As youth paints it for us.

But as the song came to an end
His joy to sadness turned;
And to his saddened heart did send
A thrill which there long burned.

And yet he lingered till the night
Had ebbed itself away,
Leaving behind upon its flight
Only sweet memory.

But as he turned his steps away,
There vanished all despair,
For in his heart a new hope lay
That ne'er before was there.

. . . . . .

Upon the wings of time the spring
And summer, too, had passed,
When lo! two hearts with love trembling,
In fond embrace were clasped.

THE MASTER

Across the field I saw the master come,
With measured step that no obstruction knew,
With shoulders bent and eyes fixed straight
ahead,
A massive frame of bone and strong sinew.
He seemed so like a humanized machine
It made me stop and look with speechless awe,
And gaze again and shudder, as I thought
How strangely wrought, this mighty thing I
saw.

I watched him as he plowed throughout the
day,
A subservient slave to his own will—
The straight line broad'ning with the up-
turned earth,
A huge blot spreading to a distant hill.
I thought how strangely out of place he was,
This warrior, born oddly out of time—
What valiant deeds this giant could have done
Had he but lived when knights were in their
prime.

There swept o'er me a sense of sympathy,
I thought to gain his good will and respect;
He seemed a man whose hope in life was gone,
His thoughts turned acid by the world's neglect;
I bade him a good eve'ning on his way—
His look of cold indifference, disdain,
Cut like a thrust of cold steel at my heart
And left me feeling my good thoughts were vain.

MOTHER LOVE

THE cold wind sighed, the breakers roared,
  Upon one dreary night,
And from above the raindrops poured
  With maddening delight.

But there she stood upon the pier,
  A mother, all alone,
With straining nerves to see or hear
  Her boy—her own loved one.

Hope rose and fell within her breast
  As did the surging sea;
At intervals, a moment's rest,
  Then death's grim certainty

With overpow'ring awe seemed near,
  As some black tow'ring wave
With fiendish madness cast its fear
  Upon a heart so brave.

As if to mock her in her grief
  They'd dash upon the pier,
Then in the darkness like some thief,
  To hide some shame or fear,

Retreat with those that'd gone before,
In search of other gain,
Or on some brighter, calmer shore
With peace once more to reign.

Yet, heedless of the black, grim night,
Its cold and bitter sting,
The mist and spray blinding her sight,
That left her shivering,

Her thoughts were only for her boy;
"O God, is he safe, or"—
A mother's cry was lost in joy,
He answered her once more.

RECLAIMED

ALONE, alone, with naught but self to break
the silence;
The mocking hours drag slowly into the depths
of night.
Alone, still alone, the weary, drooping, sleep-
less eyes
Hang heavy, while a stricken soul makes its last
great fight.

Weary, weary, struggling with the passion it
would slay,
A twitching of the nostrils and a low stifled
sigh;
Weary, so weary, the burning forehead,
stabbed with pain,
Buries itself within his arms with a stifled
cry.

Forgotten by the very world he once thought
his friend,
It needs him now no longer, nor does he wish
its aid.

Forgotten — and what of it? — one solace still
remains
(Solace of weary mortals): his debt will soon
be paid.

Silence, silence, not a sound to disturb his
breathing,
Save the prowling wind and a distant rev-
eller's tread.
Silence, silence, the midnight hours are fast
receding,
Another day is dawning — for the man who is
dead.

MEDITATION

In the solitude of my chamber, the embers
burning low,
And the lamplight growing pale with the
approach of morning's glow,
Alone with my troubled spirit, that will never,
never rest,
I ponder life's complex problems, how to serve
that spirit best.
I dream of our many martyrs—of the early
Christian race,
Of Jesus their great exemplar, whose life all
time will embrace,
Of Paul, of Pontius Pilate, of Nero, Daniel,
and Cain,
Of loyalty, intrigue, hypocrisy, bravery, and
shame—
Each has spoken to me this hour, and with
the approaching day
The spirit of night still lingers—will it always
be this way?
Must the soul struggle blindly onward, battle
with the untrue;

With thoughts that are born in a second, that years cannot subdue?
Why come they to harrass one's being — chain one to grim despair,
When life could be as unburdened, as unfettered, as the air?
And why this groping in darkness, this striving for heights unknown,
This mingling of pain with pleasure, this something we would disown?
Ah, there's the question to ponder — this something we cannot still,
This voice of our inner being that mortal senses would kill.
O spirit of cherished wisdom inherent in every breast,
Pray give us the understanding to comprehend this unrest;
To know that Soul is the savior — the light that directs the way,
That leads us ever onward, and at last turns night into day.

AN ANALOGY

A SPARROW flew into my room; then beat
against the pane
That stoutly barred its passage to the world
from whence it came.
It tried to gain its freedom, though always the
wrong way;
When at last it found 'twas useless, it gave up
in dismay.

'Twas now my opportunity to come to its
relief,
I stole upon it unawares, more wary than a
thief;
And when at last I captured this poor rebel-
lious thing
It cried with panting energy and beat me with
its wing.

Very soon it had its freedom, the joy which
it did crave,
And given by the hand of one it must have
thought a knave.—

'Tis often thus with human hearts battling
with sore distress:
When at last they have surrendered, content-
ment comes to bless.

AT CLOSE OF DAY

WITHIN the twilight of the evening hour,
In the farewell hush of reluctant day.
I watched the grandeur in the western sky
Flood the sombre earth ere it passed away;
Sweet thoughts of peace and love it left behind
And made me grateful for each earthly thing;
A gratitude that made my eyes grow dim
With thankfulness for the joy of living.

THE OUTCAST

You ask me who this is—this face
That frowns within this battered frame.
You wonder why I give it place,
And jestingly you ask his name.

To you its value is but trash,
Waste paper and a bit of pine;
It wouldn't bring one penny cash—
And yet, thank God, it is all mine.

You do not smile—I thought you would;
The jest lies on your lips unheard!
Waste paper and a bit of wood—
Who dares to mock him with a word?

Your hand, my friend, your pardon too—
Our jests are ofttimes turned to tears,
But may they never bring to you
The pain I've hidden all these years.

He whom you see within that frame
An outcast in this world was he;
Maligned and slandered was his name,
And yet—he gave his life for me.

THE GREATER WRONG

TEN paces are counted—they take their stand,
Each clutching his pistol firmly in hand;
On one side defiance, the other scorn;
And in black contrast to this peaceful morn
The spectre Death—to expiate the sin
The one thinks the other has done to him.

A second more the signal is given;
A crash—and justice is left to heaven.
The one who was wronged now stands there
avenged,
Victorious over the one condemned.
But the blood which he shed this early morn
Is recorded on high the greater wrong.

A SUGGESTION

WHEN life becomes prosaic,
And things do not seem just right,
You think there is no justice,
That the world is ruled by might,
And you envy your neighbors,
'Cause they're happier than you —
Then walk into the open
Where the sky smiles down so blue,
Where the air is pure and wholesome,
And the great world stretches forth,
Revealing many wonders
To the east, west, south, and north;
And turn your footsteps bravely
To some field or distant place,
Where Nature's smiles are sweeter
And all her creatures embrace.
Bathe in the joy of freedom,
In the sunshine of content,
Join in the songs of gladness,
And life will grow affluent.
List' to the song of robin,
The catbird, or ceaseless note

Of the much-maligned sparrow—
  Joy gushes from every throat.
They bear no ill toward mankind
  Their most unrelenting foe;
Their melodies are inspired
  With the love our hearts should know.

REGRETS

If life were but the outcome
  Of a passion free from sin,
Oh, what a glorious blessing,
  Oh, what a noble thing,
Would be this love we cherish
  Of which the poets sing,
The songs our hearts are charmed with,
  That inspirations bring,
Yet in sorrow find their ending,
  Because of this one thing
Heaven has denied us—
  A love that's free from sin.

THE VANISHING RACE

All day I travelled 'cross the desert plains,
And not a sign of reptile, man, or beast;
The wild sage-brush and cactus dusty gray—
But blemishes upon the faded way.

All day the sun its torrid heat poured down
And burned the powdered alkali gray-white;
Only the shadows from the distant hill
Bespoke of hopes that nightfall would fulfill.

All day I held fast to determined thought,
Yet craving to behold some living thing;
When lo, a tiny blot far to the east
Spread slowly, silently, to man and beast.

A blaze of red his shoulder blanket made
Against the strong light that enveloped him,
A vivid picture for this barren waste
Where once broad rivers seem but dried up
paste.

I watched him as he slowly came my way,
This battered remnant of a once proud clan,

His coarse black hair and copper-colored skin
And high cheek bones like molten bronze
worn thin.

His bony nag, a poor neglected thing,
Fulfilled the picture that his rider made—
It dragged along, not even at a jog,
Its head bent low, cowed like a beaten dog.

Is this the race our brave forefathers fought
That made them battle every foot of way,
That left their dead from ocean's shore to shore
And only ceased when warriors were no more?

Proud ancestry, where flows thy rich red blood?
A taint has stolen through thy sluggish veins
And left a weakling where a once strong heart
Made thy eyes to glow and thy frame stalwart.

Amid the verdant hills no more is seen
Thy tepees nor the camp-fire's festive glow,
The gushing streams and placid lakes unstir'd
By thy canoes—thy challenge is unheard.

Upon the grassy plains, where oft thy tribes
Pursued the frenzied, fleeing bison herds,
Or shot the prowling wolf upon its way,
Adventure and romance lie hushed today.

The spirit of thy times is hidden in the past,
Thy happy hunting ground a faded joy;
The bones of man and beast, one common foe,
Upon whose dust the winds of progress blow.

I can but feel thy sadness in my heart,
And yet rejoice because of mine own race:
In seeing thee I have my recompense,
And journey on with grateful reverence.

THE PUNISHMENT

MANY the faces we meet on life's highroad,
Many the places where we make our abode,
Many the pleasures we so gladly share in,
Though many may be good yet many with sin
Leave their sad traces upon features grown thin.

So oftentimes we find. when the end draws near,
That hearts though grown hard with many a long year
Break with their own coldness when mem'ry steals in
And shows them the evil which good might have been
If this life had been lived in conquering sin.

A FANTASY

I STOOD upon a mountain's side
Gazing across the sea,
Thoughts rose unto my lips and cried:
"Oh, veiled, unseen future,
My soul is crying unto thee,
What holdest thou?—mine eyes would
see."

Swiftly my strange words sped away,
Swiftly returned again;
A ghostlike echo seemed to say,
In accents soft and strange:
"What does the future hold for thee—
What does the future hold for thee?"

And then a deadly silence fell,
I questioned what it meant;
I heard my eager lips rebel:
"Speak! unseen presence. Speak!
Lift from my eyes this mystic veil,
That I the morning dawn may hail.

"Or else let me behold the night,
If night it be instead;
And I will follow, though the fight
Lead through some dark abyss,
Beyond the very depths of hell,
If thou will but thy secret tell."

I listened long; the voice replied
Again—in accents low
This time—and mournfully it sighed:
"Morning's dawn—dark abyss—
Beyond the very depths of hell—
If thou will but thy secret tell."

"Speak not in syllables that taunt,
But speak that I may know
What slumbers in this quiet haunt
Where thou dost ruler reign
Throughout life, until death, supreme,
Beneath those silent robes unseen.

"That I may hear and thee obey,
Mysterious voice of life.
Dost thou not say "'Tis well?'—I pray
Do I hear thee aright?
What?—Silence! Why, I am alone,
And thou, deceptor, where art gone?

"To thy abode from whence thou came,
To some dark hidden realm?
And as I plead to know thy name
The wind wafts back thy sigh,
And whispers softly in my ear
'The day is spent—the night is near.'"

A DESIRE

In idle dreams thoughts delve again
In fancies that pressage yet idler hours;
Oh, if we could but know ourselves
To be possessed of infinite powers;
To rise above the common things,
To heights where dwell the nobler thoughts we pen,
There to behold with new-born faith
The greater strength of those that we call men.

INDIAN SUMMER DAYS

THE leaves lie seared upon the ground, November days are here,
The long bleak nights and short gray days foretell of winter near;
The woods, denuded of their garbs, like battle-fields are rent,
The blackened trees with lifeless limbs seem mournfully silent;
The birds have gone to warmer climes, the few that still remain
Hide their sad heads beneath their wings to shield from cold and rain.

The frost has thawed into a dew, a bright warm sun looks down,
A mellow light spreads o'er the gloom and dissipates earth's frown;
And then, through some bewitchery, there steals into the air
A balmy haze, a sun-kissed breeze, and things grow wondrous fair.
June days have come to bless again, the spirit of lost Spring

Seems tripping o'er the earth with joy and cheers each living thing.

The childen romp upon the streets, the organ-grinders play,
Even the dumb brutes feel the thrill, poor tired horses neigh;
The faded hopes of yesterday all wear roseate hues—
There's something in the golden light that weary senses soothes.
The blackbirds hop with heads erect, their wings are lustrous bright,
It seems as if their feathered coats were polished over night.

The boys have built a great wood fire, whose smoke streams to the sky,
The flames leap forth and gather strength as darkness hovers nigh;
Within the glowing, cheerful light are faces bright, intent—
They labored hard to gather wood, and now are quite content.
Adventures, tales of redskins bold, excitedly are told—
Perhaps in these dark woods near by some Indian chief lies cold.

And when the smold'ring fire dies, darkness
again prevails,
The pale moon, struggling through a cloud,
the depth of night assails.
Children no longer romp in play, the boys are
home in bed,
Perhaps to dream of tales they heard, of great
Powhatan dead,
How Captain John Smith's life was spared, of
Pocahontas' fame—
Bewitching Indian Summer days, from year
to year the same.

DAN GRAY, FISHERMAN

A GREAT wide stretch of sandy beach, on which the waters roll,
Then glide again into the deep, after they hit the shoal;
Amid the swishing, roaring noise, restless through night and day,
Upon a cliff just back from shore lives fisherman Dan Gray.

His face is seared by many suns, calloused by winds and rains;
His eyes deep set, blue as the sea, a smile that never wanes.
At break of dawn he sets his sail, heaves out into the sea,
A song he sings ere he departs—a right brave man is he.

His nets lie stretched upon the sands, the sun has baked them dry;
The mended ones are now rolled up, dragged to a boat near by.

Ere nightfall comes he'll furl his sails, cast
anchor in the bay,
Then climb the cliff to home and wife, and
where the children play.

Few vices has this fisherman—he chews his
daily cud,
His pipe is most abom'nable, his shirt needs
plain soapsuds.
Yet with it all he is a man—his rightful place
is here;
He takes what life bestows on him, content
from year to year.

STONY CREEK

ALONG the banks of Stony Creek, beyond the
noisy dam,
Where oft we fished throughout the day,
where many times we swam,
Where water-lilies made their beds, and spiral
grass grew rank,
I tread my way again, knee deep—a much-
loved boyish prank.

I pluck again a blade of grass, as sharp as any
sword,
And try its edge as I did then, as proud as any
lord;
I cast my line within the stream, and see my
worm-bait sink,
And sit with knees up to my chin, perched
there upon the brink.

I see again the golden days rise from the realm
of time
And cast its youthful spell o'er me, in glowing
warmth sublime;

I watch a noisy bumblebee buzz aimlessly
around,
And tease a clumsy, flabby toad that squats
upon the ground.

I find an old familiar spot, upon a gnarled
oak-root;
I feel the tender, soothing grass, a soft balm
underfoot;
And as I gaze across the field, upon a far
incline
I see the cattle browsing in a glow of warm
sunshine.

I think of all the boyhood days enjoyed be-
neath these trees,
Of happiness that lives again, brought back
with every breeze;
And years of toil and years of pain are naught
within its spell
But phantoms of a dreamy past that boyhood
days dispel.

A DECEMBER MORNING

THE frost is on the window panes, the snow
lies deep outdoor,
Some scattered flakes have found their way
onto the kitchen floor;
A path lies straight out to the gate, piled high
on either side,
A great white blanket sparkling bright hides
all the country wide.
The trees no more stand stark and cold, they
wear an ermine gown,
Marvellous nature has spun well its fleecy
jewelled down.
The birds now seek the shovelled path for
bread crumbs scattered there,
They riot in their bold attack upon the
morning's fare.
I open scant the kitchen door, then hurry to
the shed,
Old Towser gives a joyful bark—he knows
he'll soon be fed.

The coffee steams upon the stove, its fra-
grance fills the room,

There's something cheery in its scent that
banishes all gloom.
Across the barren kitchen floor the morning's
sunlight streams,
Within its warm enticing rays old Towse'
enjoys his dreams.
I labor up the attic stairs, a very creaky flight,
And drag a bulky fur topcoat up to the win-
dow's light;
The great white hills, like mountains tall, are
seen through obscure panes;
The country is a vast white sheet, devoid of
roads and lanes.
A voice calls from the floor below—I know
its meaning well—
I scurry down the narrow stairs: loud rings
the breakfast bell.

VOICES OF THE PAST

I TALKED to thee of feelings strangely wrought
With many pangs; of bitter griefs I fought;
Of barren fields of melancholy waste,
Thick with the tares and stubbles of old days,
Where sluggish streams the air contaminate
And make the present seem all desolate.

Alone with folly once again I tread
In that grim cemetery of the dead,
And hold communion with the buried past
And read the epitaphs from first to last.

Upon this one, the words, with age defaced,
Tell of that time which now is half erased
From memory; of blessèd joys and tears,
That somehow in the thought of later years
Suggest to one those first hopes laid to rest,
Forgotten, but of all life's gifts the best.

Old thoughts awake. I see before mine eyes
Visions of days as varied as the skies:
The many hues are blended into one,
And dim the eyes like gazing at the sun.

Bewildering Youth! age so richly blessed,
So swiftly fled — with bruisèd hearts oft left,
Thy inconsistent life o'erwhelms me now:
In nourishing that which satisfied pride,
In fostering thoughts that noble deeds deride;
Creating phantoms out of which to woo
Idle fancies that age soon proves untrue.
Grand but varied life; sad to contemplate,
Because of deeds that prove inadequate.
Oft bows my head with sadness and remorse,
And sighs with longings for my soul's great loss.

L'ENVOI

Why gather weeds from the garden of life;
Why seek to quarrel, ever nourish strife;
Why look to earth when heaven hangs o'erhead;
Why speak of those things past which now are dead.
'T is now high noon — this is the mighty hour
In which man proves his weakness or his power.

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